



July 31, 2020

Julie Shadoan, J.D.  
Professor / Chair, Faculty Senate  
Department of Paralegal Studies  
1906 College Heights Blvd, #11060  
Bowling Green, KY 42101-1060

Dear Julie:

I write to request consideration from the Faculty Senate of Western Kentucky University in the adoption of a “test optional” admission standard for incoming students to our institution. As we look to the next class of Hilltoppers, there is compelling interest in expanding the paradigm of admissibility of students to our institution as well as external motivation to transition historical admission standards.

As concerns related to standardized testing have become more prevalent in recent years, some American colleges and universities have revised their admission policies to move away from requiring standardized college entrance exams. Western Kentucky University has continued to use these standardized test scores. Currently, students seeking admission to WKU must:

1. Have at least a 2.00 unweighted high school GPA, and
2. Achieve a Composite Admission Index (CAI) score of at least 60
  - a. The CAI is calculated by multiplying the unweighted high school GPA by 20, and adding the ACT composite (the GPA portion of the formula can only contribute a total of 50 points to the overall CAI score)

Catalyzed in part by testing accessibility concerns this year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most public universities in Kentucky are adopting at least a partially test optional approach to their admission standards beginning with the incoming class of Fall 2021. These universities will either not require a test score for admission consideration, or will only use them at certain GPA thresholds. The enrollment staff

has reviewed our incoming class and their characteristics. We believe that there is an opportunity for WKU to adopt a partial test score optionality in the following manner:

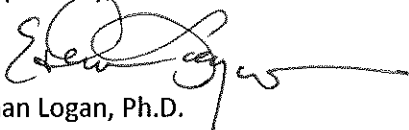
1. Students with an unweighted high school GPA of 2.5 or greater will no longer need to submit test scores as part of the admission process
2. Students with an unweighted high school GPA of 2.0-2.49 will still need to submit test scores to achieve a CAI score of 60

As an institution, WKU has been reducing the importance of standardized test scores in our recruitment and admission practices. WKU began removing test score thresholds for most scholarship consideration in the Fall of 2019. Accessibility to higher education is the most sustaining consideration to this shift in practice. There are national studies which have demonstrated that a student's GPA is a better indicator of a student's probable ability to succeed in college at a slightly higher rate than a standardized test score. Other studies have identified implicit bias in some standardized testing practices. The high school college-counseling community has been endorsing test optionality within their professional association in these recent years.

Transforming toward a primarily test-optional approach will keep WKU competitive with the admissions practices of our sister Kentucky public universities. Additionally, we will further our mission of accessibility and opportunity, while preserving academic integrity of the incoming class. Our strategy of implementation will also mitigate the challenge of enrolling students with little chance of success and burdening them with unnecessary debt. The Kentucky Council on Postsecondary Education (CPE) already requires students with a 2.0 – 2.49 GPA to enter into a learning contract with their institution of their choice; using a CAI in tandem with CPE's learning contract requirement will best enable WKU to work with the applicants who are most at-risk.

The Senate Executive Committee has already seen this proposal as have the academic deans. The Provost's Office and the Provost have also already indicated their endorsement of this approach. Information of this potential change will be presented to the Board of Regents as an information item at the beginning of August. I am seeking an endorsement of WKU's Faculty Senate on the adoption of test optional admission to our institution beginning in the Fall of 2021 to complete this transition if all support this change. If I can answer further questions about this potential change, please do not hesitate in letting me know.

Respectfully,



Ethan Logan, Ph.D.

Vice President for Enrollment & Student Experience